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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 MASERU 000362

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FOR A/S FRAZER AND AF/S; NSC FOR DR. CINDY COURVILLE AND BILL LUCAS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 7/28/2016

TAGS: [PREL](#) [UNGA](#) [USUN](#) [PGOV](#) [LT](#)

SUBJECT: UNGA BILATS/OFFICIAL VISIT FOR LESOTHO'S PRIME MINISTER

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CLASSIFIED BY: June Carter Perry, Ambassador, EXEC , STATE.

REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

11. This is an action message. See paras 5 and 6.

Background

12. (C) Post recommends high level bilats for Lesotho Prime Minister Mosisili during the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) and an official visit to Washington immediately thereafter or at a later available date. The Government of Lesotho has demonstrated its commitment to U.S. policy through the mid-2006 signing of an Article 98 agreement, support for U.S. policies in Iraq, outspoken positions against terrorism immediately following 9/11 and thereafter, successful submission of its MCC proposal and world-recognized leadership in the area of combating HIV/AIDS. In stark contrast to other countries in the region, Lesotho is unique in its determination to see through the "Know Your Status" campaign to test and treat all citizens. As the incoming chair of SADC, Lesotho will play an important role in exercising leadership across the region. Through orderly post-independence national elections in 2002 and first-ever local elections in 2005, the country has demonstrated a commitment to transformational democracy under difficult economic and political strains.

13. (C) An AGOA top performer, Lesotho has shown its willingness to work with public and private sector partners to advance economic development and diversification. Throughout often difficult SACU/FTA negotiations, Lesotho has been a strong voice in support of USG positions despite opposition from its all encompassing neighbor, South Africa. With its second national elections less than a year away, ostensible encouragement by the U.S. to "stay the course" is important despite a spate of pre-electoral violent incidents, moderated to some degree by U.S. and other donors' interventions, there appears to be deep interest in moving forward to solidify democratic gains -- including the over 50 percent "wins" by women candidates in the 2005 elections. In order to move from "transforming" to "sustained" status, Lesotho will require continued, public U.S. dialogue and support.

14. (C) We believe that the UNGA High Level Session offers an excellent opportunity to advance our agenda in Africa as well as to recognize the strides the Government of Lesotho (GOL) has made in the past two years, building on its 2003 electoral foundation and its roles in SADC and the AU.

Specific Recommendations

15. (C) Lesotho's First Lady, an anti-AIDS pro-education leader, has already accepted First Lady Laura Bush's Literacy panels and luncheon invitation. Post strongly recommends a meeting between Lesotho's Head of Government, Prime Minister Mosisili and President Bush with Secretary of State Rice and AF Assistant Secretary Frazer. The Prime Minister and the Minister of

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Foreign Affairs have indicated their interest in both the UNGA bilat and meeting the President there, if present. An official visit to Washington is also requested. Recognizing the constraints of scheduling, it may be most useful to have such a visit in late 2006 or early 2007. Lesotho will be six months into its SADC chairmanship by January, should be in the final stages (or past) of MCC accord and still four months before its own national elections. The UNGA and an official visit present opportunities to:

- Reinforce USG interest in free and fair elections in Lesotho.
- Praise the GOL leader on the successful 2005 and 2003 elections and stress the importance of continuing.
- Express appreciation of Lesotho's signing an Article 98 agreement with the U.S. and its condemnation of terrorism.
- Emphasize the importance of Lesotho as a "model" for other SADC countries in its HIV/AIDS "Know Your Status" campaign.
- Encourage the Prime Minister to press for SADC action on Zimbabwe via a concerted intervention with President Mugabe on his abuse of human rights.
- Emphasize that Lesotho's success in moving its MCC proposal forward sets a further example for LDCs, regardless of size, in addressing transformation and poverty reduction.

Additional Points

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-- With its role as well in the African Union (e.g., sending peacekeepers to Darfur), Lesotho must recognize its added responsibilities as a member of the international community.

-- In that regard, Lesotho must offer firm, vocal support for human rights resolutions and influence other African nations to support respectable Human Rights Council candidates.

-- It is in Africa's best interest to have suitable and responsible representatives who are not afraid to criticize African nations -- or others -- for crimes against humanity, dictatorial policies and rejection of opposition party participation as part of the democratic process.

-- In its own elections, Lesotho must insure inclusion of all stakeholders, rejection of any potential gender inequities or perception of corrupt practices in balloting or campaigning.

-- The U.S. has appreciated Lesotho's role in AGOA, its efforts to diversify the economy through trade missions such as that to the U.S. in 2005 and encourages strengthening of regional trade ties.

-- Lesotho's vocal support of a SACU/FTA and its voice at Cancun, Doha, and the WTO (Hong Kong) demonstrate its mature approach to global market changes.

-- Congratulate the Prime Minister (PM), his Cabinet and the First Lady for publicly recognizing the threat HIV/AIDS poses to both the physical and economic health of the nation.

-- Confirm the USG's continued support for HIV/AIDS initiatives through PEPFAR; our educational support through the Ambassador's Girls Scholarship Program (AGSP) and the Peace Corps.

-- Conclude that we look forward to greater security cooperation through future IMET programs and to Lesotho's support for USG global efforts against terrorism -- and for democratic transformation.

¶6. (C) UNGA bilats and an official visit to Washington allow us to offer public recognition of Lesotho's advances and to seek the GOL's vote on issues of importance to us in the UN and other international bodies. Post believes a high-level "pat on the back" will significantly boost Lesotho's standing and help steer the country toward political, security and economic policies we consider priorities.

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